

Just Jonathan

Oh the people we meet

So much of my life has come down to pure chance—and I'm sure you can relate. Opportunities appear out of nowhere, often because of a connection or relationship formed years earlier. If life really is that random, then I'd argue the people we meet and the way we interact with them matter more than we realize. In that spirit, I want to explore a few of the connections that have quietly shaped my path.

Let's start with a fun one: how I ended up working for the paper.

Many years ago, my mom worked as a lunch lady at the elementary school in Tama. Through that job, she met someone many of you know as "Ma" from MagicMike6XL. That's right—my connection to Michael started with our moms. Over the next decade, Michael and I crossed paths plenty of times, long before we ever became partners at the paper. Some of those stories are probably better left out of print!

After graduating in 2022, I wasn't quite ready for college, so I went straight into the workforce. That summer, Michael and I started working on a project together—a book built around funny photos we took around town. It was lighthearted, but it helped build the working relationship we've now nearly mastered. At the same time, I was experimenting with another passion project: making running videos for YouTube. Somewhere in that mix—my connection with Michael, my growing media experience, and a bit of right-place-right-time luck—I found my way into journalism.

That YouTube channel also connects directly to how I ended up at Wartburg College.

It all started with the simple idea of filming my friends and sharing our running experiences online. With some persistence and the power of social media, I built a small fol-



Jonathan Meyer

lowing within Iowa's running community. Around that same time, about four years ago, I met a guy named Lance at an Iowa State track meet in Ames. He had just committed to run at Wartburg. Nothing immediate came from that introduction, but over time, more and more of my friends began committing there. It started to feel like the place to be.

Then, in February 2023, Lance reached out. He told me about an opportunity to live in an eight-person dorm with him and several of those same friends I had met through running videos. I didn't overthink it—I said yes and trusted that the rest would fall into place.

It did. And it was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Here's a quick lightning round of how those connections kept building. Through that same YouTube channel, I met my friend Owen. We ended up living together in that eight-man dorm, and that experience brought us even closer. Owen knew I cared deeply about people and leadership, so he asked me to run as his vice-presidential candidate in a student body election. We lost, but I gained something more valuable: perspective. I realized I truly cared about that work.

That loss stuck with me. Over the next year, I kept coming back to the idea of running again, slowly building a plan. This year, I followed through—and now, I'm serving as student body president.

It's all connected.

So I'll leave you with this: think back on your own life. Consider the people you've met and the moments that seemed small at the time but ended up shaping everything. Those connections matter more than we give them credit for. As for me, I'll keep trying to live with purpose and treat every interaction with respect, because you never know what might come from it.

Until the next connection, I'm Just Jonathan.

District 53 Newsletter

We continued with a heavy debate schedule this week as we approach the second funnel date where our House bills must be passed to the Senate.

On Wednesday of this week, the Environmental Protection Committee that I chair and the Health and Human Services committee held a joint meeting so that we could hear a report from the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa. This was an interim report on their research into the drivers of cancer in Iowa. This research project was funded last year by the legislature so that we could gain science-based insight into this horrible disease and gain an understanding of why Iowa's cancer rates are higher than the national average. There was a wealth of data presented that is too detailed to relate in this newsletter, but there were a few takeaways from this presentation.

First, the data shows that cancer amongst citizens under age 20 is no different than the national average. Therefore the study is focusing on cancers for those age 20 and over. The presentation included data on the five cancers that are driving Iowa's cancer rates. Those are: breast, prostate, lung, colorectal, and melanoma. The data shows that cancer mortality rates continue to drop both nationally and in Iowa. Another surprising point was that the 2013 time-frame is when Iowa's cancer rates began to grow significantly above the national average. The study has not yet identified why that occurred. Another point was that Melanoma is one of



Rep. Dean Fisher R-Montour

the forms of cancer that Iowa exceeds the national average the most. There are many factors that the researchers are studying in order to gain further insight into Iowa's cancer rates. Based on the significance of lung cancer from smoking being the leading factor in Iowa's cancer rates, the researchers strongly recommended that Iowa increase our tobacco taxes in order to drive down the prevalence of smoking. The governor has proposed a 65-cent per pack cigarette tax increase. The House will consider that proposal later in the session.

Another leading cause of cancer that has been identified is radon. Radon is a gas that can seep up from the ground and accumulate in our homes, causing lung cancer. Due to Iowa's geology, we are a hot spot for Radon. Radon exposure is regarded as the most likely cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. In response to this cancer issue, the House passed legislation on Thursday to require all new single and two-family residence construction to include a passive Radon mitigation system. I would encourage everyone to purchase an inexpensive Radon test kit and test your own homes for this gas. If the Radon gas is present, a Radon mitigation system can be added to existing homes for a moderate cost.

House File 2624 was passed this week, a bill that requires DNA collection when a person is arrested for a felony or aggravated misdemeanor. If the person is acquitted or charges are dropped, then the DNA shall be removed from the database. Other states that have implemented this program have been able to solve thousands of crimes, helping to create greater public safety.

Over the past two weeks, the House has passed well over 100 bills. This is but a small sample of the As always, I look forward to seeing you at the Capitol or in the district.

On the Record

I want to shout out to the Tama County Board of Supervisors as they work through this year's and last year's budget. It is not an easy job. There are a lot of moving parts and no perfect answers. From our side, we understand the reality. Budgets are tight everywhere, and we are not any different. At the same time, public safety does not slow down when money is tight. Crime doesn't check the budget before it shows up, so neither do we.

Our staff are doing a lot with what we have. They show up every day and get the job done. I don't want to sound like a broken record but it makes my job easier with great staff.

When I first took office, I had a lot of other Sheriffs tell me it would take a full term to really get settled in. There is definitely some truth to that. After this first year, I feel a lot more comfortable and confident in the role. I am still learning and still chipping away at many different things, but I love the job and we are moving forward.

There is also a bigger picture right now with the tax changes being talked about at the state level. I think most people would agree that paying less in taxes is a good thing. I do not want to pay more, and I do not think anyone does.

At the same time, those changes are going to affect how cities and counties operate. There will be less room to grow, and over time that is going to put pressure on services.

Some people will say if local government feels that pressure, it means we were taking too much to begin with. I understand why people think that. But there is a difference between cutting waste and cutting into the level of service people rely on. That is where the balance has to be. There is no magic switch where you lower costs and nothing else changes.

For me, it is pretty simple. I do not want higher taxes, but I also do not want to see a drop in service. That is what we are working through. It is going to take some work, but it can be done.

We are not standing still. Local law enforcement leadership has been meeting at least once a month to talk about school safety and how we can keep improving. We continue to work directly with the schools on that.

I am also really excited about a program we are rolling out next school year, the Be The Example award. It will recognize students across Tama County who are doing things the right way such as acts of accountability, respect, and integrity. There is a lot of good in our kids, and it absolutely deserves to be recognized.

That program will be community funded and supported. We will have more information coming out soon on how people can be part of it.

You will hopefully see more opportunities this summer with events and town halls. I want people to be able to come talk to me and ask questions. I also turned my campaign page into an official Sheriff Casey Schmidt page so people have another way to stay connected. It turns out talking in person is still better than arguing on the internet.

And I will be honest, my desk phone voicemail has been reminding me that I need to get better about returning calls. It is starting to feel personal at this point. That is on me, and it will get better.

We also attended the Tama County Pork Producers annual banquet in January. Our deputies and their families donated a lot of pies for the auction, and it ended up raising a good amount of money. I tried to butter up the judges, but it did not work. I did not win best pie this year. There is always next year. I have a year to work on the judges.

At the end of the day, my job is to be honest about what we need, be responsible with what we are given, and be accountable to the people we serve.

Casey Schmidt, a Republican from Dysart, is the sheriff of Tama County.

Public notices must remain in newspapers

Government cannot be in charge of holding itself responsible

TAMA-GRUNDY PUBLISHING

There are some in the Iowa Legislature who periodically toy with the possibility of eliminating the requirement that local governments print public notices in newspapers. This is the wrong move today, tomorrow and for the future. Government transparency is more important than ever. In truth it is critical.

While the Tama-Grundy Publishing weeklies and other Iowa newspapers have an economic interest in seeing that the public notice publishing requirement remains, the issue goes far beyond a few dollars. Maintaining the legal requirement to publish government actions and meetings in local newspapers is crucial for ensuring accountability and keeping the public informed of important information that affects people's lives. And it is the job of our local newspapers to serve as a check on government, not the government to check itself.

Any proposed savings would come at a very high cost to Iowa's communities.

While many people now browse digital platforms for information — including tamatoledonews.com,

northtamatelegraph.com, and sun-courier.com — not everyone has access to the internet or the technological know-how to navigate online platforms. And the staggering amount of information available online, representing every viewpoint, degree of accuracy, hidden agendas and motivations from every philosophy and side of the political spectrum, makes it more and more likely public notices posted online would be lost among the chaff. Worse, they may be vulnerable to manipulation or not easily accessible through search algorithms.

By publishing public notices in newspapers, government bodies can ensure that critical information is available to everyone in a format that has stood the test of time for accuracy and accessibility. It requires governments to provide timely information for citizens to participate in their government. The notices are appearing in the communities in or very near where the decisions are made. Public notices cover a range of activities — bids and leads for public projects, minutes from government meetings, foreclosures, petitions, election information, water quality reports

and other information that is important to citizens and vibrant communities.

The basis for public notices published in newspapers remains as important as ever:

Requiring an independent, third-party to publish the notices in accordance with the law helps prevent government officials from hiding information they prefer the public not to see. The government cannot be in charge of holding itself responsible. A public notice must be published in a forum independent of the government. As an independent and neutral third party, a newspaper has an economic and civic interest in ensuring that the notice delivery requirements are followed.

Publishing the notice in a newspaper ensures that the information is widely accessible to the public. Unlike social media or other online platforms, newspapers are trusted sources of information that are available to everyone, regardless of whether or not they have access to the internet or social media accounts. This helps to ensure that all members of the public have an equal opportunity to be informed and involved in

government decision-making.

A public notice must be archived in a secure and publicly available format. Newspapers have always fulfilled this requirement because a public notice published in a newspaper is already archivable and accessible. This is particularly important for notices that contain information about government decisions and actions that impact individuals and communities for years to come. Requiring governmental bodies to publish legal notices in newspapers ensures that this information is always accessible.

The public must be able to verify that a legal notice is not altered after being published. In a newspaper notice, an affidavit is provided by the publisher, which can be used in an evidentiary proceeding to demonstrate that a true copy was published as well as the exact wording that was used. Legal notices published in newspapers are subject to public scrutiny and can be easily monitored by journalists or concerned citizens. This guarantees that governmental bodies are held accountable and acting in the best interests of their constitu-

ents.

Community newspapers have established relationships with readers and have a deep understanding of the issues and concerns that matter most to them. When public notices appear in newspapers, government bodies can tap into these relationships.

Newspapers have a long history of serving as watchdogs for their communities, holding local officials accountable and shining light on issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. By requiring government bodies to publish public notices in newspapers, we are ensuring that these important watchdog functions are preserved and that the public has access to information that might otherwise be hidden from view.

Many newspapers also publish the public notices on their websites and nearly all public notices across the state are also uploaded to a centralized website at iowanotices.org, a site run by newspapers at no additional cost to government or taxpayers. It is available for those who prefer accessing an electronic version.

There may be parts of the country where newspa-

per readership is receding but not in Iowa. Iowa has 241 community newspapers with one or more newspapers in every county. Market research conducted in 2021 showed 84% of Iowa adults read local print or digital newspapers. And newspaper readers are more engaged in their community. Newspapers reach 93% of Iowans who report, "I feel that have a responsibility to help share the future of my community."

It is true that newspaper charge a nominal fee, set by Iowa law, for publishing legal notices. This is a very small price for freedom, as it is typically under 1% of any government body's spending. All Iowans should demand more scrutiny of government affairs, never less.

We believe that requiring governmental bodies to continue publishing legal notices in local newspapers is crucial for ensuring transparency, accountability, and accessibility in government decision-making. Newspapers — especially Iowa newspapers — remain a trusted source of information that is widely accessible and easily searchable.



Sheriff Casey Schmidt

Tama-Toledo News Chronicle
(ISSN 01649132) is published weekly by,

Tama/Grundy Publishing, PO Box 1300, Marshalltown, IA 50158-1300

Periodicals Postage Paid at Toledo, IA and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Tama-Toledo News Chronicle, PO Box 1300, Marshalltown, IA 50158-1300

Grant Gibbons, Publisher

Rhonda James — Advertising Director

Robert Maharry,
Managing News Editor

Member of the
Iowa Newspaper Association

Subscription prices for
Tama—Toledo News Chronicle:

In County	
6 Mo.	\$32.50
1 Year	\$65.00
Out of County/Out of State	
6 Mo.	\$36.38
1 Year	\$69.00

Subscription payments are non-refundable.